

JUL 24 2000

Golden Gate Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 81, No. 5 May 1999

## Elizabeth Snyder, 1903 – 1998

Elizabeth Snyder passed away early last year. She was an active participant in the Golden Gate Audubon Society for more than twenty years and continued her commitment by naming GGAS as the beneficiary of her

estate. Beth Snyder's generous bequest totals well over \$100,000; we are thrilled! Her gift, along with others in recent years, makes it possible for GGAS to vigorously pursue conservation issues, among them the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge, Gateway Valley, and Arrowhead

Marsh, along with our field trips and education program. We think Beth would be pleased to know how we will be using her funds.

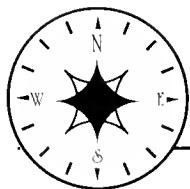
Apparently, her Audubon years were among the happiest ever. The case manager who handled her affairs in the last few years of her life reported that even when Beth's memory of other events had all but disappeared "she came alive and recounted in enthusiastic detail stories of Audubon trips."

Howard Cogswell and Kay Loughman perused thirty years of *The Gull* looking for references to Beth Snyder and found these bits of information – unlikely to be a complete record of her activities. Beth (Mrs. David P. Snyder) joined GGAS in December 1955, and in August 1956 became the chair of the Screen Tours activity of the society. In February 1960, she was elected to the GGAS Board of Directors as First Vice-President, a position she held until June 1963. In the spring of 1963 she took on the responsibility of recruiting GGAS hosts for Audubon Canyon Ranch duty. She participated as an Area Leader in the 1960 and 1966 Oakland Christmas Bird Counts. In February 1967 she joined other Auduboners in a trip to Eureka to see the Snowy Owl.

Beth was a kind and generous individual, evidenced in the way she hosted almost annual GGAS trips at her Sierra Valley cabin. Trip reports in *The Gull* were uniformly enthusiastic. A sample, from 1960: "By the Snyder cabin we saw a Pileated Woodpecker, one of the highlights of the trip. We also had excellent views of Calliope Hummingbirds, MacGillivray's Warblers, and Green-tailed Towhees. In the meadow at the top of the summit Beth Snyder had a pair of nesting Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers, which were the other highlight of the trip. We saw both of the

*Continued on page 8*





# Field Trips Calendar

**G**AS field trips are conducted by experienced birders who wish to share their knowledge and love of birds with others. All trips are free of charge (except for entrance fees that may be charged by regional, state, or national parks) and are open to everyone, regardless of membership in the National Audubon Society or Golden Gate chapter.

**SATURDAY MAY 1,  
SUNOL REGIONAL PARK.**

See April Gull for details. Leaders: Gloria Markowitz and Ken Ackerman (415) 892-2910 \$(\*)

**SUNDAY MAY 2,  
STRYBING ARBORETUM.**

See April Gull for details. Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna (415) 566-3241.

**SUNDAY MAY 2,  
WILDCAT CANYON REGIONAL PARK.**

See April Gull for details. Leader: Malcolm Sproul (925) 376-8945. (\*)

**SATURDAY MAY 8,  
BRIONES REGIONAL PARK.**

See April Gull for details. Leader: Rusty Scalf (510) 666-9936. \$

**SUNDAY MAY 9,  
MT. DIABLO STATE PARK.**

Meet at 9 a.m. at the Rock City parking lot, one mile after passing through the South Gate entrance. Take Hwy. 24 to Walnut Creek, then go south on I-680 to Danville. Take the Mt. Diablo Rd. exit, go left under the freeway and follow the signs to Mt. Diablo State Park. We will look for Rufous-crowned and Sage Sparrows, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, swifts, swallows, woodpeckers and warblers. Bring lunch and liquids. Trip ends about 1 p.m. Leader: David George (510) 339-6848. \$(\*)

**WEDNESDAY MAY 12,  
MINI-TRIP TO BRIONES REGIONAL PARK.**

See April Gull for details. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301, and Jean-Marie Spoelman. \$

**SATURDAY MAY 22,  
GARIN REGIONAL PARK, HAYWARD.**

Meet at 8 a.m. for this half day walk along riparian habitat rich with singing breeding and late migrating warblers, vireos and other birds. From Berkeley, take 880 south to the Industrial Parkway exit. Take Industrial left (east) to Mission, right on Mission, and left on Garin. Take Garin into the park. Meet at the parking lot on the left. Heavy rain cancels. Beginners welcome. Leader: Anthony Fisher (510) 658-8769.

**SATURDAY MAY 29,  
TENNESSEE COVE, GOLDEN GATE  
NATIONAL RECREATION AREA.**

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the trailhead. From San Francisco take Hwy. 101 north to Marin Co. and exit on Hwy. 1 toward Mill Valley and Stinson Beach. After about 1/2 mile, turn left onto Tennessee Valley Road and continue to the end of the road. This approximately 3-miles round trip walk will take us through lush riparian habitat. We hope to see nesting hawks and other breeding birds, including Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's and possibly MacGillivray's Warbler. Lunch optional for this half day trip. Beginners welcome. Leader: Bob Hogan (415) 258-0811. (\*)

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY, JUNE 4-6,  
YOSEMITE'S BIRD LIFE.**

See April Gull for details. Leaders: Dave Quady (510) 704-9353 and Bob Lewis (510) 845-5001, E-mail: Rlewis0727@aol.com. \$ (\*)

**SATURDAY JUNE 5,  
SIBLEY VOLCANIC REGIONAL  
PRESERVE, OAKLAND.**

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the preserve

parking lot. Sibley is a gem in the Oakland hills where one can see birds not commonly found so close to a major metropolitan area. At this time of the year, this tiny park should be alive with singing California Thrashers, Rufous-Crowned and Lark Sparrows, Western Bluebirds and more, and with the early start, we may get lucky and see an owl. Directions: From Highway 24, take the Fish Ranch Road exit east of the Caldecott Tunnel. Continue .8 miles to Grizzly Peak Blvd. Turn left and go 2.4 miles on Grizzly Peak to Skyline Blvd. Turn left on Skyline and proceed to the park entrance, on the left. A map is recommended. Leader: Jennifer Matkin (415) 681-6926, E-mail: envirolaw@aol.com

**SUNDAY JUNE 6,  
STRYBING ARBORETUM.**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular 1st Sunday of the month half-day trip. The Strybing Arboretum is a delightful section of Golden Gate Park, with several "micro-habitats" attracting a varied array of resident, migrant and vagrant birds. Beginners and all others welcome. Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna (415) 566-3241.

**WEDNESDAY JUNE 9,  
MINI-TRIP TO REDWOODS REGIONAL  
PARK, OAKLAND.**

Meet in the park at 9:30 a.m. Take the Warren Freeway (Hwy. 15), exit onto Redwood Road, and proceed east about 3 miles to Redwood Gate, southern entrance to the park. Meet just inside the small parking lot on the left. We should see Black-headed Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush, Bullock's Oriole, Solitary, Hutton's and Warbling Vireos. Bring lunch. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman. \$(\*)

**FRIDAY JUNE 11,  
HAYWARD SHORELINE.**

Meet at 10 a.m. at the Hayward Shoreline Visitor Center at the end of Breakwater Avenue for this half-day trip. Take I-880 to Hwy. 92 (Hayward/San Mateo Bridge exit). Exit at Clawiter, cross Clawiter onto Breakwater Court. Turn left onto Breakwater Ave. There will be breeding swallows, baby stilts and avocets, and more, perhaps even Black Skimmers. Bring lunch and liquids. Beginners welcome. Leader: Bob Lewis (510) 845-5001, E-mail: rlewis0727@aol.com.

**SATURDAY JUNE 12,  
LEONA HEIGHTS REGIONAL  
OPEN SPACE, OAKLAND.**

Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot for this half day walk featuring riparian and scrub habitat, singing Wrentit, California Thrashers and more. From Berkeley, take 580 south to the Keller offramp (about 1.5 miles past the junction with Hwy. 13). Go east (uphill) on Keller about 8/10 miles to Campus Drive. Turn left onto Campus; then almost right away, turn right onto Canyon Oaks Drive (this right turn seems like turning into a private parking lot for the Ridgmont condominium complex). Go left to the end to the parking lot. Beginners welcome. No facilities. Leader: Rusty Scalf (510) 666-9936. E-mail: rscalf@jps.net.

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY,  
JUNE 19-20, YUBA PASS.**

See April Gull for details. Leader: Peter Allen (415) 892-8063. (\*)

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY, JUNE 25-27,  
LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK.**

Join the Murphy family on the annual GGAS family camping excursion to Lassen. In past years we have seen Willow, Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers, Black Swift, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird, Calliope Hummingbird,

Black-backed Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker and most of the warblers and finches that breed in the mountains. The more serious birders will meet at the Manzanita Lake Campgrounds store at 6:30 a.m. on Friday and again on Sunday. We will bird around the lake for 2-3 hours, return to camp for breakfast, then rendezvous again at the store at 10:30 a.m. for another outing. The Friday outing will be a leisurely hike of about 3 miles on one of Lassen's beautiful trails. We may climb as much as 700 ft. Wear sturdy shoes and bring lunch and liquids. Suntan lotion, a hat, mosquito repellent and warm clothing may also be necessary. On Saturday, we will meet by the camp store at 7:30 a.m. and caravan north to Burney Falls, Fall River Valley and Baum Lake. Bring lunch and liquids. This all day excursion of about 100 miles will include a 2 or 3 hour swim at Lake Britton while watching for Bald Eagles. (If you forget your swimsuit, the trails at Burney Park offer a wonderful diversion, and fishermen can try their luck in some of northern California's finest trout streams.) Since this is a long and tiring day we suggest a get-together for dinner at a nearby restaurant instead of returning to the campstove. For the Sunday outing we will meet at 10:30 a.m. to drive through the park, making frequent stops for birding. We should reach the south entrance around 1 p.m., depending upon how long we play in the snow at the summit. For this final event, bring warm gloves, a plastic trash bag for a mini-toboggan, and a camera.

Stop at our campsite for further information. We will have a campfire every evening beginning at 8 p.m. Bring your own chair (and a cup of wine if you choose). We will provide hot water for tea or coffee. **Check the campground bulletin boards or the office at Hat Creek Resort for our poster, campsite number, and any last minute changes in the schedule. Directions:** From the Bay Area

drive north on I-5 to its junction with Hwy. 44 in Redding. Go east on Hwy. 44 to the northwest entrance of Lassen. Camping facilities are available at Manzanita Lake. Lodging is available about 15 miles north of the park at Hat Creek Resort, Old Station (530) 535-7121. Other information can be obtained from the park headquarters, Mineral, CA 96063. Leaders: Dan and Joan Murphy (415) 564-0074. E-mail: murphsf@worldnet.att.net. \$(\*)

**SEPTEMBER 26-OCTOBER 1,  
SERVICE TRIP TO RAMSEY CANYON.**

This birding gem, a Nature Conservancy Preserve located in the Huachuca Mountains in southeast Arizona, is undergoing major renovation and needs volunteers to assist in a variety of projects. There will be 3 days of work interspersed with 5 days of hiking and birding with staff naturalists and docents. Jeffrey Black is leading this service trip, and asks GGAS members interested to call him (510-526-7068) for more information and reservations. Trip price is \$595 and includes all meals. Some lodging is available for an additional charge, otherwise, the group will be car camping.

**PLAN AHEAD AND MAKE  
RESERVATIONS FOR THESE  
POPULAR TRIPS:**

**1) YOSEMITE ALPINE ECOLOGY,** George Peyton (510-444-5151, days), July 24-25;  
**2) LASSEN BACKPACKING TRIP,** David Rice (510-527-7210, E-mail: drice@jps.net) and Robin Pulich, August 6-9.

Trips marked with a (S) go to parks or other sites which require an entrance fee. Carpooling arrangements will be attempted by leader for trips marked with a (\*). Problems, etc.: If you need a ride or can take a passenger (even if a trip is not marked with an (\*), if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, if you have suggestions for trips, or if you are interested in leading a trip, call Lillian Fujii (510) 256-4167, Field Trips Committee Chair.



**Pick up your ears birders, spring has sprung!**

Springtime unleashes a wonderful assault upon our auditory senses. The perpetrators? Our songbirds belting out their best during courtship. Insects, amphibians (spring peepers, anyone?), and mammals all use vocalizations to communicate. Only humans and, possibly, cetaceans surpass bird sounds in vocal complexity and subtlety.

Just as in humans, not all birds have beautiful voices. Some are definitely musically "challenged". Bird song is technically all types of vocalizations as well as mechanical sounds such as those produced by bills, feathers or other body parts. Since birds in general have limited senses of smell, taste and touch, vocalizations are necessary for survival. As a result, bird sounds are highly evolved.

Anatomically, birds are able to make sounds via a syrinx. Both American vultures and storks lack syrinx muscles so these families live mostly in silence except for a rare hiss or croak. Among the rest of the avian population there is a wide range of sounds produced. Because birds can sing through both bronchi simultaneously or separately, some birds have "twin" voices. Those divas among birds, thrushes, wrens and larks, owe their virtuosity to the subtlety to their vocal anatomy.

There is still no agreement on whether birds know their songs through instinct or whether they learn them through imitation and practice. It seems to be a bit of both and varies according to species. Baby passerines (songbirds) make begging sounds very soon and begin generalized singing within a few weeks. If deprived of learning from adult birds a baby bird may stick with its "baby

song" or may invent missing parts and end up with its own complex song. If young are exposed to other species, they might adopt or adapt that song.

As a bird watcher, your experience is greatly enhanced if you tune in to bird songs and sounds. Tapes are very helpful but field experience with an "old pro" is the best way to learn. Begin by learning only a few each time. Eventually you will note that within species there is a similar "quality". Birds which live in thick vegetation (e.g. wrentits, Hutton's vireos) usually have loud voices that carry well. Tree top dwellers (e.g. some warblers) have thin voices. Not everyone can develop song and call identification to the same degree, of course. But how about reading in a field guide that a chestnut-sided warbler says "I wish to see you Miss Beecher"? WHAT? Newer guides are more helpful as in Peterson's description of Hutton's vireo: a double-noted zu-weep (rising inflection). And just when you're sure you know a song sparrow's aria, you'll go to another geographical area and it will be slightly different! MY song sparrow begins with Beethoven's 5th's first 4 notes. And YOURS?

Why would birds want to call attention to them, including a predator's notice? The advantages of communication must increase their survivability. There are times, however, when birds seem to sing simply for the joy of it, releasing emotional energy. That must be the case in springtime.

One kind of vocalization is song. This is a series of notes sung in a sequence that forms a characteristic phrase, just as a line of music contains a melody and rhythm. Most of the bird songs we hear in spring (or

whenever the mating season is) are those of a male advertising for a mate and also declaring the boundaries of his territory – dueling bird songs, in some cases. Another type of song seems to be more of that emotional-release-type song and contains some artistic invention. A third type of song is called a "whisper song" and is sung during bad weather or in the heat of a blistering day. I've heard scrub jays crooning to their young in this sotto voce uncharacteristically sweet way. Technically these are sub-songs.

Calls are usually brief notes, which convey information immediately to others. The jays are notorious for alerting ALL birds of imminent danger. Calls can be used many ways: warning, defense, distress, begging, flock cohesion (e.g. on migration), identification of a food source, gathering (e.g. calling together pre-social chicks) and for comfort. When things are quiet during a birding outing, sometimes you can "pish up" some birds. Sit quietly and make a kissing sound on the back of your hand (hope no one is looking). You can attract some species such as wrens and wrentits even though you feel foolish. Some of us have no shame!

A few birds sing throughout the year, especially in the southern parts of their ranges. The Northern mockingbird, Carolina wren and Northern cardinal stay on their breeding territories all year long so they sing partial, muted or infrequent songs. Owls, nightjars and the American woodcock as well as the mockingbird mostly sing night songs. If you're awake, it's a nice serenade.

**Perk up your ears, birders!  
Spring has sprung!**

# Save The Quail—Update

With the onset of spring the California Quail in San Francisco, are preparing for the breeding season. Winters closely knit coveys are starting to dissipate. The males have started to give their loud "Cu-ca-cow" calls in search of mates. As the birds begin to wander away from their wintering grounds they will become harder to keep track of, California Quail have been known to walk as far as eleven miles in search of a nest sight.

In Golden Gate Park the remnant population of quail in Strybing Arboretum proved hard to see through the winter. After seeing the Park's last quail on the December 29 Christmas Bird Count I could not relocate the covey in many attempts. On January 14, Stephen Davies was able to find them in the Arboretum's Cloud Forest section. On February 7, I found them by the Moon Viewing Pool, but could only find one female. On March 3, the covey had moved to the Succulent Garden and I was delighted to discover there were still two females. By the 10th, one of the females appeared to be paired with a male. On the 14th Bill Scoggins reported the females back at the Moon Viewing Pool. Birdwatchers on the San Francisco Bird Blitz found the quail scattered about the South America and Eastern Australia sections. At this time a number of birds were giving the "Cow!" calls of unpaired males. If the quail are to survive in Golden Gate Park, a majority of this year's chicks must survive to adulthood; we are looking for people to closely watch the birds during the nesting season.

People in other parts of the City were on the look out for the Quail as well. In the Presidio after many

attempts Harry Fuller was able to locate two males at Kobbe and Upton on March 10, Mark Eaton later confirmed this sighting. Josiah Clark heard quail calling near the dune restoration project at Lobos Creek on March 11. Harry reported great news on March 26, "This morning, after repeated searches, I found the California Quail in the vicinity of the restoration project north of the abandoned leprosy hospital in the Presidio. In fact, I nearly ran over them as they walked calmly along the edge of the street. There were at least thirteen Quail, including six females. The Quail appeared to be "coupled," walking and feeding in pairs within the loose "covey group."

Attempts at finding quail in other sites proved less rewarding. On March 3, Dan Murphy looked for the quail that nested in the dune restoration site in 1998 at Fort Funston without any luck. On March 11, I also searched the area without success. In McLaren Park, the GGAS field trip was unable to locate any quail. David Graves asked me to give a slide presentation on the quail on March 20, for The Friends of McLaren Park. After the talk I was able to locate a single male near the park's amphitheater. David Graves and Keith Grier have both incorporated the natural areas of McLaren Park into their youth programs, let's hope there are enough quail left for the children to study.

**The Save the Quail Campaign** is off to a good start, however much more will need to be done to keep the quail from disappearing in San Francisco. We are working with Kristin Bowman and Lisa Wayne to increase quail habitat under the City's Natural Areas Program. The program could use help with moni-

## Donations

### Least Tern Circle

(\$200 or more)

Afton Crooks

### Clapper Rail Circle

(\$100 or more)

Martha and Craig Spriggs, Ann Thoron and George Hale, Stuart Arthur, Katherine and William Loughman, William Grasse, Jean and Bruce Conner, H. M. Heller, Janet Nelson, Mignonet Montez, and Stefanie Arthur.

### In Memoriam

May Zeiger in memory of Ernestine Taylor

### Gifts (under \$100)

John W. Merchant, DDS, Babette and Herbert MacCoby, Elizabeth Rieger, Patti Boberts, Marion Yeaw, John Sproul, Mary Burke, Mary and Cordelia Neal, Paul Colvin, Phila Rogers, Esther and Thomas Clanon, James Ross, Adrienne Debisschop, Caroline and Robert Lichtenstein, Marion and Robert Blumberg, Nancy Huneke and David Hamilton, Shirley Vezilich, Nina Van Rennselaer, Ruth Wrentmore, Douglass Sherk, Dorothy Frantz, Judith Davis, Jean and Laurence Maderis, Afton Crooks, Melanie Lutz, Kathy Down and Gregory Kelly, and Marjorie and Philip Bush,

The Society Welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor of or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use of general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in *The Gull*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Secretary.

toring for quail and other birds, as well as hands on habitat restoration. Save the Quail could also use help in creating children's curriculum based on our quail. We are also looking to obtain digital video equipment to document the quail. If you can help with grant writing, or can loan hi8 or digital video we can use you too. Any and all help and quail sightings will be greatly appreciated. Call Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983 or email to [ash@sfo.com](mailto:ash@sfo.com)



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## Audubon's Friends, Part II

**This is a continuation of short biographies of men whose names are remembered in part because they were associated with John James Audubon, and he chose to commemorate them.**

### Edward Harris (1799–1863)

Son of a wealthy farmer and exporter, Edward Harris grew up near Philadelphia. He had money, a deep interest in nature, and a generous spirit—a perfect match for John Audubon.

Audubon and Harris met in 1824. Harris immediately became an admirer and supporter of Audubon's art and publication plans. Harris bought many paintings from his friend and even insisted that Audubon accept sizable gifts of money.

They became close friends. Harris went on two of Audubon's major expeditions: the 1837 trip along the Gulf of Mexico, and the 1843 trip up the Missouri River to the Yellowstone River. When they were apart, the two men kept up a lively correspondence.

On the Missouri River trip, Harris shot a specimen of his namesake sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*). Nuttall and Townsend had first found the sparrow nine years earlier, and Nuttall had published a scientific description. Typically, Audubon was oblivious to Nuttall's work. He gave the little sparrow different Latin and common names. The common name, Harris' Sparrow stuck.

The species itself was long an elusive nester, and it took nearly 100 years before the first Harris' Sparrow nest and eggs were

found in the stunted forests south of Churchill, Manitoba, by George Sutton, Olin Pettingill, and other American ornithologists..

Harris outlived his friend and loyally continued to send money to the widowed Lucy Audubon.

### John Henslow (1796–1861)

The Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*) is even more elusive than Harris' Sparrow. Harris' is uncommon in the winter in California. Henslow's Sparrow may be unknown in this state and is hard to find even on its breeding territory in the East.

Reverend John Henslow was at one time one of the best-known scientists in England. After giving up the ministry, he spent many years teaching botany at Cambridge. He and Audubon met in England in 1828, and Henslow became a friendly supporter of Audubon's effort to find subscribers to his birds folio.

Henslow made a much more important contribution to science than befriending Audubon. He recommended his former student, Charles Darwin, as the naturalist on the voyage of the "Beagle." Decades later, Henslow presided over the first open debate over Darwin's evolutionary theory before the Royal Society.

### Thomas Lincoln (1812–1883)

The Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolnii*) is a regular winter bird in the Bay Area. Many people imagine it was named in honor of President Abraham Lincoln. In fact, Audubon named the bird, in 1834, in honor of his younger friend, Thomas Lincoln of Dennysville, Maine. Audubon had met young Lincoln before his trip to Labrador in 1833 and thought him a natural crew member. He proven to be correct, as Lincoln was hard-working and brave.

The group reached northern Nova Scotia in late June, and there Audubon heard a bird song he did not recognize. He called for his companions, and it was Thomas Lincoln who first located and shot the little songster. It was a new bird that Audubon originally called "Tom's Finch." It would be the only new species Audubon found on that trip.

Lincoln returned to Maine where he became a successful farmer, taciturn neighbor, and staunch abolitionist. In his later years, Lincoln recalled Audubon as "a nice man, but as Frenchy as thunder." Another member of the Labrador expedition was William Ingalls, and his own recollection of Lincoln was "quiet, reserved, sensible, practical, and reliable."

### Isaac Sprague (1811–1895)

Isaac Sprague first met Audubon when the older man admired Sprague's bird drawings

in 1840. Sprague was invited to join Audubon's expedition up the Missouri River in 1843. On that trip, near the mouth of the Yellowstone River Edward Harris and John Bell shot a small brown bird. Audubon realized it was a new species and named it "Sprague's Missouri Lark," but we know it as Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*). Sprague himself laid down his drawing tools a few days later and found his namesake's nest and eggs in a mound of prairie grass.

Some of Sprague's fine drawings were incorporated into Audubon's later publications, without credit. However, Sprague soon became America's best-known botanical illustrator of his day. He was chosen to illustrate Asa Gray's classic, *Botanical Textbook*, and then his subsequent *Flora*.

Sprague also knew and worked with Dr John Torrey (whose name graces the pine tree) and ornithologist Henry Henshaw, the man who first described and named Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*). Sprague continued to produce illustrations and paintings for himself and friends until his death.

## William Swainson (1789-1855)

The Englishman, William Swainson, was a talented, industrious, and strong-willed naturalist and artist. He was self-trained but meticulous. In his later years, he became highly critical of Audubon's slipshod scientific descriptions.

In the 1830s, however, Audubon and Swainson were friends and traveled to Paris together, seeking supporters for their publications and drawings. Even before meeting Audubon, Swainson was well-versed in American ornithology. He had traveled to Brazil and collected birds there a decade earlier. He also had access to Mexican birds collected by the Bullock family. Swainson himself first described a number of New World species based on Bullock's specimens. Among California birds Swainson first described and named are Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), Canyon Towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*), Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*), Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullocki*), American Dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*), Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*), and Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*).

Swainson illustrated a prodigious number of scientific and popular works on nature. His bird drawings are as exciting and realistic as any of Audubon's.

Professing disgust with England, Swainson moved with his family to New Zealand in 1840 and never returned to England, although he spent considerable time in Australia. His final home was near Wellington.

Audubon commemorated Swainson by naming a warbler (*Limnolophus swainsonii*) after him, a warbler given to Audubon by Rev. John Bachman. Later Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) and Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsonii*) were given his name as well.

## Audubon Chapters Invited to Bouverie Preserve

Members of the Golden Gate Audubon Society and other local Audubon chapters are invited to participate in the annual special spring Guided Nature walk at the Bouverie Preserve of the Audubon Canyon Ranch. This year Saturday, May 15 has been set aside.

The two to five mile walk, overly mildly to moderately strenuous terrain, begins at 9:30 a.m. and ends at 1:30 p.m.

Reservations are taken by phone (group size is limited to six per caller) on a first come, first served basis. Space is limited so contact the Bouverie office at 707-938-4554 as soon as possible if you are interested.

There are also several upcoming Guided Nature Walks at the preserve for the general public. These will be held on April 3, April 24, May 1, and May 8 (all Saturdays). A lottery system is used to select participants for these hikes. You should contact the Bouverie office to receive a lottery form.

## Elizabeth Snyder

birds at the nesting hold from very close range. West of the cabin some of us visited a pair of Dippers that were feeding young."

One last treat, gleaned from *The Gull* (Sept. 1958) is this gem from the Field Notes column:

"I have been watching a pair of Dippers. Their nest, though I can't see it, is behind a cascade just below the house. They come to the pool below the fall with insects in their beaks, pause a moment on its brink and then make a dash over the surface of the water using their wings as oars and disappear behind the cascade. They do not go through the fall but a little to one side of it. The most amusing moment is when they come floating out again on the current, amid the foam and the spray." – *Beth Snyder, Sattley, California.*

In addition to this article, you'll find delightful remembrances written by Marie Mans and Peter Allen, who knew Beth during her Audubon days.

### Beth Snyder Remembered

In 1956, when I went on my first Golden Gate Audubon trip to Yuba Pass north of Lake Tahoe, we all were met by Beth Snyder and her husband at their cabin at the pass. A short siesta on Beth's deck was followed by a most memorable trip: Beth had staked out Black-backed and Pileated Woodpecker nests, Calliope Hummingbird perches, vireo singing posts – and what

seemed like hundreds of flycatchers, kinglets, thrushes and warblers in the meadows at the summit then surrounded by virgin uncut fir forests. And, most unforgettable of all, an early morning trip to a pristine Sierra Valley where Black Terns virtually attacked our intruding cars. In between these treats we always assembled to lunch and learn on Beth's deck surrounded by the sounds and sights of the northern Sierra. For years Beth organized this annual GGAS pilgrimage and many of us often stopped by her cabin during the summer months to find out "what was going on".

In the 1950's the general public had little idea of "conserving" anything and birdwatching was regarded as a hobby for "little old ladies in tennis shoes". Beth, who in no way resembled that description, took some of our younger members in her jeep on the National Forest backroads to show them the beauty of the mountains and to look for "rare birds". Among them were Rich Stallcup (then in his teens) and Guy McCaskie (in his twenties). They turned into regulars and then leaders on these trips, and as you know, both have become premier birders in California and have contributed much to the preservation of birds in the West.

Beth and her husband usually moved to "the cabin" before the snow melted in the spring, and Beth – on a big board in her kitchen – kept track of arrivals and departure of migratory

mountain birds. Over the years, those records became invaluable both for the Audubon Society and the Forest Service.

The Yuba Pass area is still one of the best birding spots in Northern California – though it has lost some of its pristine beauty to logging and agriculture. Beth truly loved it up there and, when she was not able to lead our trips anymore, we took many new members on our annual event to meet Beth at her cabin where she still kept track of much of the wildlife until – I believe – the early 80's, when her husband passed away.

At other times of the year, Beth was active in GGAS in Berkeley and often participated in our field trips and early adventures at the Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory. But her heart and soul were at Yuba Pass where she so graciously shared with us her experiences and enthusiasm for at least 25 years.

I am delighted to hear that Beth left her estate to GGAS, an indication how much our many happy sojourns must have meant to her. It's her way to continue to share her enthusiasm about the birds and their mountains with many future generations. *Marie Mans, May 1998*

### Beth Snyder, a Remembrance

I first encountered Beth Snyder as a neighbor in Berkeley. I knew nothing of her activities as a birder, but when I first went to Yuba



Pass, on a GGAS trip in the 1960's led by Marie Mans, Marie brought the group to the Snyders' cabin for lunch, and we sat on their deck and watched for Green-tailed Towhees and Calliope Hummingbirds. At this time Beth had been keeping tabs on the birds of the area for several years, and continued to do so until around 1980 or so. Her list formed the basis for the somewhat expanded checklist now published by the SF State field campus at Yuba Pass.

When I inherited the Yuba trip from Marie, about twenty years ago, we continued to stop for lunch at the Snyders' cabin for several more years, until it became apparent that neither Beth nor her husband was well enough to deal with a large group of mostly strangers. In any case, it was Beth Snyder who introduced Marie (and the rest of us) to this really extraordinary birding area; pointed out the best parts of it; showed us the remarkable Sierra Valley and its Great Basin avifauna. She was a knowledgeable and enthusiastic birder, and I, and Marie, and GGAS are all in her debt. I owe her a lot, for the Yuba Pass trips have been a great pleasure for many years now, and my wife and I consider them one of the really satisfying things we do every year. (Since we lead two trips on consecutive weekends, we get to spend almost two weeks in this splendid country.) – Peter Allen, April 1999

## **We Need Your Help!!!**

### **Seeking Program and Membership Chairs**

**G** GAS does many wonderful things. We help fight for our wildlife. We enjoy our wildlife and we educate our society about the need to preserve our wildlife. But who are we?

It's you! GGAS is made up of volunteers who take a few hours every month to keep GGAS healthy and active. We have fun and we are greatly rewarded for our efforts by a strong sense of satisfaction. We do good deeds and it feels good to do them.

GGAS is always in need of new volunteers and right now our need is great.

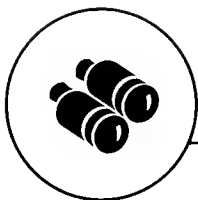
We desperately need a new Program Committee Chairperson. Our Program Committee chooses and makes the arrangements for the GGAS monthly program. We hold seven of these slide show/video nature presentations each year. The programs are usually enormously entertaining and they provide a real service to our membership.

Our present Chairperson is retiring, however, and we need someone to replace her. All it takes to do the job is an interest in birds and natural history and some time for telephone calling to find the presenters. It's fun. You meet interesting people. You get to see the shows you have always wanted to see since you chose them. Please give us a call at the GGAS Office at 510-843-2222.

We also need a Membership Chairperson. GGAS depends upon its membership for volunteers and for the funds necessary to keep us active. The more members we have the more we can do.

We need someone to help us plan how to increase our membership. While we have the largest Audubon chapter membership in the state our numbers have not been increasing and they should. We do great things (witness our Arrowhead Marsh wetland restoration project and our Alameda education project) and we can do even more with just a few more folks.

If you have any marketing skills or just want to help us out, please give us a call at the GGAS Office at 510-843-2222 and join the many GGAS volunteers who do great things and feel great for doing them.



Feb. 26 - Mar. 26 1999

The winter rains continued past the Spring Equinox and there is still abundant snow in the Sierras. Few migrating warblers have been sighted in Northern CA, and all but one of the review species during the period are aquatic birds, including three rare Laridae. Despite the slow start, many songs and calls are in the air. Recently, this birder was completely fooled by a Steller's Jay imitating a Red-shouldered Hawk, until it followed up with a perfect imitation of a Red-tailed Hawk, alternating with a "squeaking door" motif. Those who like to bird by ear will find the article on bird language in the March-April, 1999, *Audubon*, of great interest. It is daunting to realize the variety of calls and songs of which some species are capable.

### Grebes to Ducks.

Individual Red-necked Grebes, uncommon on the coast, were at Coyote Point Park, SM, Mar. 7 (RT),

and off the east end of Crissy Field, SF, Mar. 19-26 (JC, CL). Several were also seen at MacKerricher State Park, MEN, Mar. 10 (DT). Large numbers of Laysan Albatross, as many as 8 per day, were seen on a Feb. 20-23 research cruise W and SW of the Farallones (SR). The Point Arena, MEN, wintering bird remained until at least Mar. 13 (DC, DA). One **Manx Shearwater** (*Puffinus puffinus*) was sighted from Pigeon Point, SM, Mar. 20, as were 15 Black-vented Shearwaters (RT).

A Ross's Goose was at the El Charro exit to I-580, Dublin, ALA, Feb. 28 (MF) and two others were seen at Arcata Bottoms, HUM, Feb. 28 & Mar. 7 (NS). The Santa Cruz Main Beach, SCZ, was an unusual location for a lone Brant on Mar. 20 (MTL). Ten Eurasian Wigeons were reported over ALA, COL, HUM, LAS, MRN, MTY, and SAC counties. A male **Garganey** (*Anas querquedula*) was at the Cosumnes River Preserve, SAC, Mar. 7 (JT). This teal is a very rare Eurasian transient that normally migrates to the Aleutians, and there are very few Northern CA records. One "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal was spotted at Bolinas Lagoon, MRN, Mar. 1 (AS). Tufted Ducks continued on Borax Lake, LAK, Feb. 26-Mar.16, with one to 3 individuals reported (GC,DR fide JW). One female Tufted Duck was at Lake Merritt, ALA, Mar. 9, 17, 19 (LT, GE) and single males were observed at the Emeryville shoreline, ALA, Mar. 13, Mar. 21 (JL, SRO, GE), at the Las Galinas Water Control Plant, MRN, Mar. 20 (HC), and at the O'Neill Forebay, MER, Mar. 21 (KVV).

A male Harlequin Duck continued off Laguna Point, MEN, Mar. 1 (DT), while there were 3 others off Virgin Creek Beach, MEN, Mar. 10 (DT), and a single bird remained at Monterey Harbor, MTY, Mar. 16 (DM). The White-winged Scoter reported over the last two months

continued in its unusual inland location near Oroville, BUT, as of Mar. 14 (RR). Single Oldsquaws were found at King Salmon, HUM, Feb. 28 (W), at Moss Landing, MTY, Mar. 2, 9 (BM, TL), continuing at the Berkeley Marina, ALA, Mar. 3-19 (JL, SRO), and at an unusual mountain location at the Redding Sewer Ponds, SHA, Mar. 13 (DG, SRO, PG). Fifteen Hooded Mergansers were seen over AMA, MRN, SF, and SCZ counties, with the most birds (6) at Harkins Slough, SCZ, Mar. 8 (MPRBA).

### Raptors to Alcids.

Four dark morph Swainson's Hawks made an early spring appearance at San Luis NWR, MER, Feb. 27 (TC), and another dark morph bird was at the Iron House Sanitary District, CC, Mar. 26 (MF). At an unusual location was a Golden Eagle taking a ground squirrel at Arrowhead Marsh, ALA, Mar. 21 (JD). Two Pacific Golden-Plovers were seen at Spaletta Plateau, PRNS, MRN, Mar. 2 (EG), and two others were at the Lodi Sewage Ponds, SJ, Mar. 14 (BW). 180 Semipalmated Plovers, uncommon on coast in March, were at the south spit, Humboldt Bay, HUM, Mar. 1 (DF). Two to four Black Oystercatchers returned to unusual locations at Point Emery and the Berkeley Marina, ALA, Mar. 7 & 13, near where they were seen last year (GE, JL, SRO). Another two Black Oystercatchers were reported at Alameda Naval Air Station, ALA, Mar. 7 (GE). A Rock Sandpiper remained at Laguna Point, MacKerricher State Park, MEN, Mar. 1, and there was another individual roosting / mi. S. of the first bird (DT). Two Rock Sandpipers were also at North Jetty, HUM, Mar. 6 (W).

An immature Franklin's Gull was reported at the Stockton

#### Abbreviations for Observers:

DA, Dick Ashford; B, Bloomfield; BB, Bob Brandriff; BBr, Bev Brock; TC, Ted Chandik; GC, George Chaniot; JC, Josiah Clark; DC, Dave Clauber; CC, Chris Corben; HC, Hugh Cotter; CCr, Clary Creager; GD, Gary Deghi; PD, Pierre Delastre; MD, Matthew Dodder; JD, Judith Dunham; GE, Graham Etherington; ME, Mike Feighner; GF, George Finger; DF, David Fix; DG, Dee Golles; PG, Phil Gordon; EG, Ed Greaves; SH, Steve Hampton; KH, Keith Hansen; ASH, Alan S. Hopkins; LH, Lisa Hug; DJ, Dave Johnson; DL, David Lai; RL, Rick Lebadour; L, Lohse; CL, Calvin Lou; TL, Tom Lowe; JL, John Luther; BM, Barry McLaughlin; DM, Dave Melliger; PM, Peter Metropulos; RM, Richard Mix; RR, Richard Redmond; DR, Don Roberson; MR, Mike Rogers; SR, Steve Rottenborn; SRO, Steve Rovell; PS, Paul Saraceni; NS, Nelson Springer; AS, Andrew Stretfield; TS, Stuerer Tim; RT, Ron Thorn; DT, Dorothy Tobkin; WT, Wally Tordoff; JT, John Trochet; MTL, Monte Tudor-Long; LT, Larry Tunstall; KVV, Kent Van Vuren; W, Wachs; BW, Bruce Webb; AW, Alan White; JW, Jerry White; AWi, Adam Winer; DY, David Yee

#### Abbreviations for Counties and Others:

ALA, Alameda; AMA, Amador; CAL, Calaveras; COL, Colusa; CC, Contra Costa; FRE, Fresno; GGP, Golden Gate Park; HUM, Humboldt; LAK, Lake; LAS, Lassen; MAD, Madera; MOB, Many Observers; MRN, Marin; MEN, Mendocino; MER, Merced; MTY, Monterey; MPRBA, Monterey Peninsula Rare Bird Alert; PLA, Placer; PRNS, Point Reyes National Seashore; SAC, Sacramento; SBT, San Benito; SF, San Francisco; SJ, San Joaquin; SM, San Mateo; SCL, Santa Clara; SCZ, Santa Cruz; SHA, Shasta; SON, Sonoma; STA, Stanislaus; YOL, Yolo

Sewage Ponds, SJ, Mar. 15-23 (DY, BW). An adult winter-plumaged **Little Gull** (*Larus uinnntus*) found at the City of Davis Wetlands, YOL, Mar. 10, was reportedly a first county record (SH). Yet another adult **Little Gull**, also in winter plumage, was seen at Stockton Sewage Ponds, SJ, Mar. 15-23 (DY, BW). It was found in a flock of thousands of Bonaparte's Gulls. Another of this Eurasian species, the world's smallest gull, had been reported in SCL county last December. As mentioned in the *March Gull*, this species began breeding in Canada in the 1960's and winters on the East Coast of the U.S. (Harrison, 1985). The 3<sup>rd</sup> winter-plumaged **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (*Larus fuscus*) first reported Dec. 20, and a winter visitor there the year before, was still at L. Cunningham, SCL, Mar. 9 (SR). Two Glaucous Gulls were at the dump off Fremont Boulevard, SCL, Feb. 26 (BB), 4 were at Pilarcitos Creek, SM, Mar. 5 (RT), and single birds were reported at the Marin Headlands, MRN, Mar. 15 (DL), and in Schoellenberger Park, SON, Mar. 25 (RL). An apparent first-winter "**Kumlien's**" **Iceland Gull** (*Larus glaucoides*), normally confined to the N. Atlantic, was at the mouth of Gazos Creek, SM, Mar. 20 (PM). Other previous sightings occurred in SCL county in Jan., 1998 and this past February. There is an excellent series of photographs of the latter bird by Mike Rogers in the "Recent Rarities Photo Gallery" on Joe Morlan's website. The taxonomy of this bird is complex and in dispute, since the "Kumlien's" form may be a subspecies of the Iceland Gull, or even a separate species (Harrison, 1985). In CA, the subspecies is currently not accepted as a separate species. A high number of 7400 Black-legged Kittiwakes was counted off Pigeon Pt., SM, Mar. 20 (RT).

Black Skimmers seem to be moving ever northward, with one seen at the Richmond Pier, CC, Mar. 16 (RM). Two **Parakeet Auklets** (*Aethia psittacula*) were discovered during a pelagic research cruise. One was seen 61 mi. W. of Point San Pedro Feb. 20 and the other was 53 mi. W. of Half Moon Bay Feb. 23 (SR). These auklets are extremely rare winter visitors (Small, 1994) which breed on many sites off the far North Pacific (Harrison, 1985). Two Horned Puffins, uncommon in CA waters, were found dead on North Beach, PRNS, MRN, Mar. 13 (LH).

### Hummingbirds to Grackles.

A male Costa's Hummingbird was in a private yard in Berkeley, ALA, Mar. 24,25 (BB, MF). This Southwestern species has only scattered spring records in Northern CA (Small, 1994). A female Red-naped Sapsucker was reported at Holbrook-Palmer Park, SM, Mar. 7 (RT). Cassin's Kingbirds were found in their normal locales along Panoche Rd., SBT, Mar. 1 & 22 (GF), and at both Mercy Hot Springs, FRE, and at the Panoche/New Idria Rd. intersection, SBT, Mar. 13 (PS). The **Thick-billed Kingbird** (*Tyrannus crasirostris*) first reported in December of 1998 was still at Half Moon Bay, SM, Mar. 6-7 (GD, KH).

Six or seven Sage Thrashers were at their usual site along the BLM Access Rd., FRE, Mar. 1-22 (GF, PS). One individual was in Del Puerto Canyon, STA, Mar. 13 (WT), 5 were along La Paloma Rd., MER., Mar. 21 (MF), and another bird, which may be a first county record, was seen on Foothill Rd., TEH, Mar. 20 (RR). A Brown Thrasher, noted since December in a private yard in Fresno, FRE, (CCr, BBr), was reported March 13 and 21 (MR, MF). The *Audubon* article cited

## Warbler Sightings

### Nashville Warbler

Mar. 4,6	Rohnert Park, SON	CC, AW
Mar. 18	Menlo Park, SM	MD

### Palm Warbler

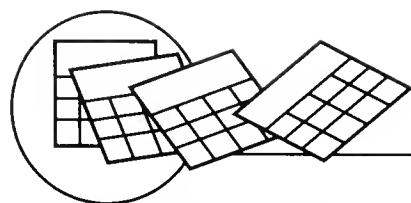
Mar. 1	Arcata Marsh, HUM	L
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### Black-and-White Warbler

Feb. 27	Pilarcitos Creek, SM	RT
Mar. 13	Pescadero Creek, SM	RT

above states that one Brown Thrasher displayed over 2000 songs! Up to 150 Bohemian Waxwings were at Martis Creek Wildlife Area South of Truckee, PLA, Feb. 27-Mar.14 (BW, TS, MOB). This species is not recorded most winters but when present is often in large numbers (*Birds of Northern California*, McCaskie et al, 1988). Sightings of unusual Wood Warblers were very scarce during the period (see Chart).

A Summer Tanager was at Strybing Arboretum, GGP, SE, Mar. 21 (ASH). Single Clay-colored Sparrows were in Rohnert Park, SON, Mar. 4,6 (CC, AW), Arcata, HUM, Mar. 9 (B), and in San Bruno Community Gardens, SM, Mar. 20 (AW). The latter is undoubtedly the same bird as reported Dec. 6 by RT (AWi). Two Vesper Sparrows were on the BLM Access Rd., FRE, Mar. 13 (PS), and another two were found on Phillip Rd., PLA, Mar. 12 (SH). Five Sage Sparrows were also on the BLM Access Rd., FRE, Mar. 13 (PS). Phillip Rd., PLA, hosted 3-4 Lark Buntings Mar. 10-14 (BW, PD, DJ) and there was a female at Berenda Reservoir, MAD, Mar. 21 (MF). Individual Swamp Sparrows were reported from Pilarcitos Creek, Half Moon Bay, SM, Feb. 27 (RT), Higgins-Purisima Rd., SM, Feb. 27 (RT), Harkins Slough, SCZ, Mar. 8 (MPRBA), Rd. J14 near the Calaveras River, CAL, Mar. 11 (JL), and two more were near Butano Creek, SM, Mar. 15 (RT). Two Yellow-headed Blackbirds, uncommon on the coast, were at the Moonglow Dairy, Moss Landing, MTY, Mar. 15 (MPRBA). A male Great-tailed Grackle, uncommon in Northern CA, was seen at Avocado Lake, FRE, Mar. 21 (MF).



## May Meeting

### Creation of California Myths and Images of Myth-Making

Gray Brechin

The California Dream is the American Dream only more so. At our May meeting Dr. Gray Brechin will present a fascinating and interesting illustrated slide show on how and why the experience of living in California has been equated with sleep, and what that has done to the native biota since our collective nap began in the Gold Rush.

Gray Brechin is a post-doctoral scholar at U. C. Berkeley. He is



May 20, 1999

7:00 p.m.

Randall Museum

San Francisco

the author of the recently released book *Farewell, Promised Land*; awakening from the California Dream (with photographer Robert Dawson), and the soon-to-be released book *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*. Brechin and Dawson co-curated the exhibition *Awakening from the California Dream: An Environmental History*, now features at the Oakland Museum.

This is one program you simply will not want to miss. Circle your calendar and plan to be with us on May 20th.

#### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the office if you have any questions.

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